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Bloody Elbow Article titled “UFC Lawsuit: Kidnapping, extortion? Manager gives bizarre reasoning to keep fighter pay private”



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## UFC Lawsuit: Kidnapping, extortion? Manager gives bizarre reasoning to keep fighter pay private

*Seems like Ali Abdelaziz went to bat for the UFC instead of the fighters during a recent declaration.*

By Anton Tabuena | [@antontabuena](#) | Aug 22, 2018, 7:30am EDT



Photo by Ethan Miller/Getty Images

One of the points being argued during the on-going lawsuit against the UFC, is whether or not fighter contracts that are used in the case would be sealed to the public. Interestingly enough, the UFC managed to get one of the more well known managers in the industry to go to bat for them instead of the athletes.

In a document obtained by Bloody Elbow's Paul Gift, manager Ali Abdelaziz had a declaration stating that if contract information went public, it would hurt the fighters and somehow give the promoters the "strategic advantage" during negotiations.

If that wasn't counterintuitive and bizarre enough, he also gave fighters being at risk of "kidnapping and extortion schemes" as reason for this information to be kept from the public.

Here's what Abdelaziz declared: (**Full document can be found here**)

"The terms of fighters' contracts are typically subject to a confidentiality provision. For many of the fighters I represent, the confidentiality of these terms is very important. Many fighters do not want the terms of their contracts — including compensation and benefits — to be publicly disclosed

"For some fighters, public disclosure of such information raises legitimate safety concerns for them and their families, including making them targets of kidnapping and extortion schemes. In addition to safety concerns, some of the fighters I represent have communicated to me the desire to keep their compensation, benefits, and obligations under the contract confidential for privacy and other reasons, including to avoid requests for money from friends and family.

"Public disclosure of the terms and compensation of fighters' agreements may also hinder me in obtaining the best possible deal for a fighter and give a strategic advantage to MMA Promoters in negotiations with fighters, which may ultimately work to the detriment of the fighter."

There's a lot to unpack on Abdelaziz's peculiar reasoning.

In major sports leagues, contract details and compensation being made public have shown to have been very beneficial for the athletes. Salaries have **constantly gone up** in those leagues since then, and a lot of it has to do with their ability to know the market rate for their services.

So contrary to what Abdelaziz is saying, this makes it easier, not harder, to negotiate and obtain better deals for athletes if they know how much people on a similar level are getting paid.

As **Erik Magraken of Combat Sports Law** points out, "knowledge is power. You would be hard pressed to find a certified agent in major league sports saying athletes should be kept in the dark when it comes to market rates."

Magraken also notes that Abdelaziz's statements that argue on behalf of the UFC — instead of the fighters — also contradicts the promotion's very reasoning for wanting to keep the

contract information sealed. You see, the UFC themselves say that information being made public hurts their “ability to negotiate.”

7. The subject contracts between Zuffa and Hunt contain proprietary information such as the number of bouts agreed to by the parties, the compensation to be paid for those bouts, the lengths of the agreements, and a variety of other provisions. These provisions are unique from fighter to fighter such that public disclosure of this information would harm Zuffa relationships with the hundreds of fighters it has under contract by inhibiting the company’s ability to negotiate with any given fighter as he or she may desire to be paid based on an apples-to-oranges comparison of what others have received as opposed to the unique facts applicable to that fighter. I have personally experienced fighters holding out or refusing to accept contract offers based on the perception that he or she should receive the same deal as another fighter regardless of differences in experience, skill level, fight records, marketability, etc. If this situation were multiplied across the hundreds of fighters needed to successfully run Zuffa’s business through the public disclosure of individual fighter contracts, the contract negotiation process would become unmanageable.

Lastly, let’s take a look at the various other perplexing reasoning he gave.

I’m sure that highly paid athletes (or people in general) could run into unwanted requests for money from friends and family, but is that reason enough to stunt the growth of that very salary they’re worrying about parting with?

Also, is there a major kidnapping and extortion problem going on in the NBA, NFL and MLB? Because all their contract details down to their very specific bonuses are available to the public, and they’ve constantly benefited from it.

Abdelaziz’s head-scratching declaration seems to be completely opposite to what most legitimate agents in other sports would claim, but alas, this is MMA after all.

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